This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

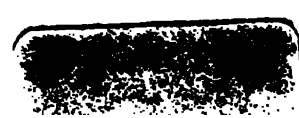
+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

23498.56.12

HARVARD
COLLEGE
LIBRARY



CHARLES THE FIRST.

CHARLES THE FIRST;

AN HISTORICAL TRAGEDY.

In Four Acts.

BY

W. G. WILLS,

AUTHOR OF 'THE MAN O' AIRLIE,' 'MEDEA,' ETC.

[*As performed at the Lyceum Theatre.*]

WILLIAM BLACKWOOD AND SONS,

EDINBURGH AND LONDON.

1873.

(117)

23498.56.12

Harvard College Library
May 7, 1912.
Gift of
Ernest B Dane
of Boston

LONDON:
PRINTED BY WILLIAM CLOWES AND SONS,
STAMFORD STREET AND CHARING CROSS.

Dedicated

TO MY MOTHER,

AS A TOKEN OF THE DEEPEST LOVE, ADMIRATION,

AND RESPECT.

February 1873.

SOME SLIGHT DIFFERENCES will be found between the words as spoken on the stage and those in the book. These have arisen from alterations considered by the Author necessary to be made *in preparing* his work for the press.

23498.56.12

Harvard College Library
May 7, 1892.
Gift of
Ernest B Dane
of Boston

LONDON:
PRINTED BY WILLIAM CLOWES AND SONS,
STAMFORD STREET AND CHARING CROSS.

Dedicated

TO MY MOTHER,

AS A TOKEN OF THE DEEPEST LOVE, ADMIRATION,

AND RESPECT.

February 1873.

PREFACE.

THE EDITOR of this play feels great pleasure in laying before the English public, in a printed form, a work that has already afforded so much intellectual enjoyment to the patrons of the English stage.

Mr. W. G. Wills's 'Charles I.' may be fairly reckoned among those plays that mark a transition period in the history of the drama; indeed it may be added, in this case, a transition from bad to good. An era has set in when people have ceased to believe that aliment for the British theatre is only to be found in Paris, and that the cleverest adapter is consequently the greatest dramatist. That such a change has not only taken place in exceptional minds, where the wish is father to the thought, is fairly proved by the great success of Mr. W. G. Wills's play at the Lyceum. The subject is English, the treatment is English also. Of both the French schools of dramatic art the author is wholly independent. The cold formalities of the "classical" party, and that tampering with

all social institutions which has marked the progress of the "romantic," are alike alien to his feelings. For his models he has regarded neither the period of Louis XIV., nor that of the second Empire; but he has looked to the monuments of the grand Elizabethan age.

In connection with the success of this play, the fact is important that the subject is not only thoroughly English, but that it is taken from English history and treated in a poetical spirit. The first emancipation of the modern English from the French stage was effected by the means of short original comedies, in which the transient habits of this country were, with more or less accuracy, portrayed. But even those who rejoiced in the moderate reform thus far carried out refused to believe that it tended towards the revival of a drama at once national and poetical. The English drawing-room and the English croquet-ground might indeed be exhibited with all their details, and fine ladies and gentlemen figuring therein might indulge in good English repartee. But as for tragic drama, or anything that approached it, that was gone for ever.

Under these circumstances, it was but natural that the production of 'Charles I.' at the Lyceum Theatre took every one by surprise. An historical tragedy, it had been received, not with cold approbation—had attained not what our neighbours call a *succès d'estime*—but it had evidently appealed to the sympathies of the public more strongly

than any new poetical work brought out within the memory of living men. People not generally used to the melting mood felt themselves compelled to shed tears, not over the woes of some respectable half-comic pater-familias in a domestic tale, but over the sorrows of a king who perished considerably more than two centuries ago.

Closely to follow all the details of the stirring period which preceded the Commonwealth was not the intention of the author. The aim and the mission of the historical dramatist were not the same as those of the historian; but his main purpose was the exhibition of historical characters strongly and sharply defined, and to effect this purpose minor circumstances might be modified. When history is to be represented on the stage it is of more importance that the incidents should be typical than they should accurately copy facts.

If Mr. Wills's play derives interest from the period to which it refers, there is no doubt that it also derived interest from the period of its production. Within a comparatively short time the people of this country seem to have recovered that respect for ancient national institutions to which England owes her greatness, but which, under hostile influences, threatened not long ago to become weakened, if not extinct. Avoiding political phrases, we may fairly say that we are living in a day of wholesome "constitutional reaction," and that the revived feeling of loyalty finds its exact expression in 'Charles I.'

The declaration of the unfortunate monarch that he died a martyr to the Constitution has been borne in mind by Mr. Wills. It is as the guardian of the Constitution against the irruptions of Anarchy, and also as the pattern of the true English gentleman that he places Charles upon the stage.

When the appearance of a new author is simultaneous with the rise of an actor who can give reality to his imaginings, the coincidence is most felicitous. The chroniclers of our stage still dwell on the good fortune of William Shakspeare in being the contemporary of Richard Burbage. It is not the least merit of Mr. Wills that he has created a character which has first allowed full development to the genius of Mr. Henry Irving.

THE EDITOR.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

CHARLES I.	MR. H. IRVING.
CROMWELL	MR. G. BELMORE.
MARQUESS OF HUNTLEY ..	MR. ADDISON. / MR. H. FORRESTER.
LORD MORAY	MR. E. F. EDGAR.
IRETON	MR. R. MARKBY.
PRINCE JAMES	MISS ALLCROFT.
PRINCE HENRY	MISS WELCH.
QUEEN HENRIETTA MARIA ..	MISS ISABEL BATEMAN.
LADY ELEANOR	MISS G. PAUNCEFORT.
PRINCESS ELIZABETH	MISS WILLA BROWN.

CAVALIERS, PAGES, SOLDIERS, ATTENDANTS, &c.

First produced at the LYCEUM THEATRE *under the management of* H. L. BATEMAN, *September 28th*, 1872.

[*Passages between inverted commas are omitted in the representation.*]

CHARLES I.

ACT I.

SCENE: HAMPTON COURT.

[*View of the Thames; musical instrument, book, cloak on the grass in the shade.*]

Enter Lady ELEANOR.

" I' FAITH! his majesty is very near,
" Here be his gentle traces, plain as track
" Of leveret on the snow. Troth here were games!
" The zittern—sad old airs, I wis, for children.
" A book—'Right Merry Tales for Foolish Folk,'
" Read with quaint utterance and rueful brow,
" And with such awful liftings of the finger,
" As hold a babe betwixt a laugh and shudder.
" Faith! there are bogies now in London streets,
" That well might fright grey hairs. The world's gone mad!
" And where's the king but junketing with bairns!
" Slander and treason swagger through the streets.
" And where's the king? alack! calm as the moon
" Seen through a panic of storm-driven clouds,

" In perfect peace among her wistful stars.
" I rede a sorry waking from such slumber;
" And, in good troth, it needs but little gift
" Of prophecy when on the fickle sunshine
" Is sharply outlined the advancing shadow."

Enter Lord HUNTLEY.

HUNTLEY. Methinks I've strayed into the maze of Rosamond.
I fairly am at fault. Ah, here's the river!
They told me, by the river.

ELEANOR. Good-morrow, my Lord Huntley.

HUNTLEY. Give you good-morrow, Lady Eleanor.
We are well met. Stead me to find the king.

ELEANOR. What is this hurrying to and fro? this bustle?
My lord, to my poor thinking, ere the night,
This Master Hampden and his following
Will broach our wine-casks.
The king arrives, without or state or envoy,
But yesterday. The queen comes with dispatch,
As ruffled as a bird 'scaped from the fowler,
In quest of his most truant majesty.
Then comes Lord Moray, all his holiday smiles,
Quite blank and drawn. Now you arrive, post haste;
Good my Lord Huntley, what's to do in London?

HUNTLEY. Not much. Canst thou not tell by sooth-saying?

A few heads broke; much good October ale
Wasted on sots. "I prithee, canst thou tell,
"Is my Lord Moray very high in favour?
"ELEANOR. Good sooth, as close as e'er was Buckingham.
"Hast thou not heard that the young Prince of Wales
"Hath left the court in dudgeon, when he learned
"That Moray was invited? Come, good, now,
"There's a sweet crumb of gossip for thy craving.
"Say, what's this sudden news?
"HUNTLEY. Moray's career will not be long, methinks.
"'Fore George! he's safer here than in the town.
"To-day he left it timely, for his life.
"ELEANOR. Truly, her Majesty cannot abide him.
"He is not long for court.
"HUNTLEY. Ah, very like.
"The devil gives short lease to a king's favourite.
"His father was dear gossip to King Jamie;
"And this gay lord, his godson, as I heard,
"He was commended to his present Majesty
"By the King on his deathbed—some such tale.
"My Lady Eleanor, I've somewhat strayed,
"And have some urgent business with the King.
"Do me the favour—
"ELEANOR. Nay,
"I will not budge a step without a bribe.
"Now, prithee, leave this pestilent air of mystery,
"'Tis neither courtierwise nor statesmanwise."

In sooth, I warrant thee, here's some stale news,
Which takes so long in coaxing.
I'll wager thee a yard of *point de Venise*,
There's nought to tell, *malgré* these airs of mystery.

HUNTLEY. Oh, nothing, less than nothing, my good lady.

London grows large apace; bread is come down;
They say the plague is gone away to Cairo.
Well, I'll e'en try to find the King myself [*going*].

ELEANOR. Nay, you will lose yourself, and catch some mischief.

Marry, now, I can tell thy news already,
By my divining art. Lady Carlisle
Hath blabbed too much to Master Pym. My lord,
Have I thee there?

HUNTLEY. In very troth, my lady,
Thou *art* a soothsayer—chartered court Sibyl!
What need hadst thou for picking my old brains?
Now, by mine honour, if King Jamie lived,
It had gone hard with thee, but thou hadst fared
As badly as a warlock [*laughs*].

ELEANOR. Sayest thou?
And dost thou dare mock at my gifts, my lord?

HUNTLEY. Not I, in faith! Bell, book, and candle, madam,
Are serious matters.

ELEANOR. I am beholden to you, my good lord.

Mock on, mock on; but all the court could tell thee
The words of Lady Eleanor come true.
'Twas I foretold, my lord, the first-born prince
Should find in the same day birth, christening, burial;
'Twas I foretold, though mocked at then as now,
The fatal hour when Felton stabbed the Duke.
Good my Lord Huntley, I will meet thee now;
I'll cast thy horoscope, and read for thee
The manner of thy death!

" HUNTLEY. Now, Heaven forbid!
" Thou'rt very good. And dost thou live at court
" To menace with the grisly dart of death
" Poor trembling souls? 'Fore George! methinks I see
" The corpse-lights in thine eye: thy very coif
" Doth look like death-gear.
" Oh! thou art most discomfortable company
" For a poor sinner with distempered spleen!
" ELEANOR (*angrily*). My lord!"

HUNTLEY. Nay, be not angry. In good soberness,
If you predict for me, when Thomas Huntley
May do some comely action, strike some honest blow,
With blood or coin aid his unhappy country,
I'll list to that and note it. For my death,
When, in God's time, it comes, the secret is
With Him and not with thee!

ELEANOR. Hush! hush! my lord. The Queen!

Enter HENRIETTA.

QUEEN. Marquis,
I'm always glad to see you at the court.
You come to see his Majesty?

HUNTLEY. My business,
Your Majesty, is somewhat pressing, or—

QUEEN. Make no excuse. You will be welcome, sir.
I go to seek the King, and I will tell him.

HUNTLEY. I thank your Majesty.

QUEEN. I wish you do like better England,
Marquis,
Than your cold country, Scotland?

HUNTLEY. Please your Majesty,
But my cold country is too hot for me.
It went hard with me to escape with life.

QUEEN. And I shall not forget the noble cause:
Your toleration to the suffering Catholics.
Here and in France command my services.
I shall not lose the occasion.

HUNTLEY. I humbly thank your Majesty.

[*Exit.*

QUEEN. Eleanor,
Hast seen the King?

ELEANOR. The King was here but now, your Majesty.
This ruffled grass is the sweet chronicle
Of some right merry game. Here have the pixies danced.

QUEEN. Oh! I do thank you, Eleanor; I'll find them
Along the banks, upon the pollard walk [*going*].

ELEANOR. A moment I would crave your gracious pardon,
'Tis haply best your Majesty should know—

QUEEN. What?

ELEANOR. That your Majesty should be prepared
Before you meet his Majesty—

QUEEN (*impatiently*). Of what—what—what?

ELEANOR. Should be prepared to see a sudden change
In retinue and household.

QUEEN. My retinue!

ELEANOR. For some good reason, which his Majesty
Best knoweth, all your Majesty's French servants
Have been discharged.

QUEEN. *Bon Dieu!*

ELEANOR. Discharged with liberal quittance, and commanded
To part for France to-day.

QUEEN. My servants all discharged! impossible!
It is not true!

ELEANOR. I feared 'twould move your Majesty to anger.

QUEEN. Anger with whom? Yes, Eleanor, with you!
How do you dare to question what it pleases
The King to do?
How could the King's good pleasure anger me?

ELEANOR. I humbly crave your Majesty's forgiveness.
In good sooth, as a loyal, loving servant,
I would be fain your Majesty were angry;
Yea very angry, e'en to quitting England.

QUEEN. Quitting England! What do you mean to say?

ELEANOR. So please your Majesty, I have had a vision,
Foreshadowing trouble great and notable;
And like the petrel hanging o'er the wave
With warning cry, I will make bold to urge
With humble suit, your Majesty should—should—

QUEEN. Why hesitate you?

ELEANOR. Should fly from England till the sky be clear.

QUEEN. Eleanor!
I do believe thou'rt in the pay o' the Commons
To banish me to France.

ELEANOR. Your Majesty doth very deeply wrong me.

QUEEN. I do not think so. What then are those hints—
Those tales—those— Now I am sure 'tis but a tale:
His Majesty hath not discharged my suite.

ELEANOR. Please you, who waited on your Majesty
On your arrival here? Methinks the men
In livery were English, and the maids
Were—

QUEEN. Let me hear no more! (*aside*) *C'est une infamie!*

I shall return to France, and never more
Set foot in England.

ELEANOR. Would your Majesty
Be pleased to hear the vision?

QUEEN (*aside*). In the face of all the Court
Who do not love me, to insult me thus.
I shall not pardon it, *non!*

ELEANOR. Be pleased, your Majesty, to hear my vision?

QUEEN (*angrily*). No! nothing. You can retire.

[ELEANOR *bows and withdraws.*

QUEEN (*relenting*). Eleanor!

ELEANOR (*stops and turns*). Please your Majesty?

QUEEN. What is thy vision? Why dost thou torment me?

ELEANOR. I only waited for your gracious leave,
And yet I fear me 'tis an idle warning.

QUEEN. And why?

ELEANOR. Unless your Majesty depart from England.

QUEEN. I do suspect thee sorely of complicity
With this same jealous Commons.

ELEANOR. Nay, your Majesty.

QUEEN. Nay; give me thy parole.

ELEANOR. May evil seize me, if your Majesty
Should prove me false.

QUEEN. What then is this—this vision?

ELEANOR. For all this latter week, in sooth, I have been
In a strange fantasy about his Majesty—
Until this morn, when, as I sat me down
At my tambour-frame, lo! I had a vision.

QUEEN. Well—well—well?

ELEANOR (*solemnly*). Methought in England was a mighty Fairing:
A Fair such as there never was nor shall be
Under the sun. The nation gathered busily
To buy and sell. And in the midst of them
Methought there was a spacious sable booth
[illegible]ing with fair black crape. And, as I looked
And marvelled what it meant, lo! at the opening
A sad and courtly figure stood alone,
In deepest mourning; torn and soiled his cloak;
His eyes exceeding sorrowful, yea, till tears
Came to the eyes of all; and as I gazed
Methought I knew the face.

QUEEN (*eagerly*). It was—

ELEANOR. The King's!

QUEEN. *Ciel!* How didst thou interpret it?

ELEANOR. As danger to the House of Stuart.

QUEEN. You say the King looked sad?

ELEANOR. Yes.

QUEEN. And alone?

ELEANOR. Quite alone.

QUEEN. I don't believe it!
If thou didst see aright, I, his true wife,
Was at his side.

ELEANOR. I tell your Majesty but what I saw.
Some trouble draweth near the King; and truly
I would your Majesty were pleased to seek
Some place of safety.

QUEEN. Of safety—no, of honour!
The place of love and duty by his side.
You have no husband.

ELEANOR. Marry! then I might have, and I well wot
A good one too—once and again I might.
Your Majesty desired me say my dream.

QUEEN (*going* L. U. E.). Say thy prayers, Eleanor. I do believe
Thou playest on my fears. Say thy prayers, Eleanor,
Thou'lt get more good than spying upon Providence.
[*Exit.*

ELEANOR (*watching her off*). Yea, and your Majesty shall have my prayers,
Whilst knee can bend, and hands can hold together.
A dearer, kinder, truer little Queen
Ne'er brightened palace hall. I'd rather smart
Under her pretty broken English tongue
Than cloy on flatteries Queens are fed withal.
[*Children laugh outside.*
Here's music, sirs, I warrant! Here are nightingales!

Truly, I hope the Queen won't miss his Majesty.
Now, my Lord Huntley. Where's my upright lord?

[*Looks out.*

QUEEN. Oh! my lord! my lord! my lord!

[*Exit.*

Enter CHARLES, *carrying the* Prince JAMES *on his shoulder, and leading the* Princess ELIZABETH.

KING. This is the place where cavaliers dismount
And bait their horses. Why, my good man Jamie,
You grow apace, and overweight your horse.
ELIZABETH. Father, a story.
KING. Or a ballad, or a song,
Or else a merry talk! Which shall it be?
ELIZABETH. The ballad of King Lear.
JAMES. Yes, say King Lear.
KING. "*King Lear once ruled in this land.*"
Sit thou upon the stone, my Goodman Hodge:
This is thy Mistress mounted on her palfrey.

[*Places the boy down on the grass, retaining* ELIZABETH *on his knee.*]

ELIZABETH. Now father—"*King Lear once—*"
KING. "*King Lear once ruled in this land*
With princely power and peace,
And had all things with heart's content
That might his joys increase."

QUEEN (*having entered hastily*). At last I find thee! I have much to tell.
Didst thou forget me, love?

KING. Welcome, dear heart! Beshrew thy tarrying,
I had but half a welcome from the bairns:
I missed the sweetest greeting of them all.

QUEEN. Yes—I was left behind in London.

ELIZABETH. Go on, father, go on.

KING. In troth I have forgot what's next.

QUEEN. Nay, Charles.

KING. *Plaît-il, ma femme?*

ELIZABETH. Nay, we are busy here.

KING. What's the next verse?

ELIZABETH. *"So on a time"*—

KING. *"So, on a time, it pleased the king"*—

QUEEN. My Charles, my dearest love; I cannot think
I have been treated with thy wonted care.

KING. Say'st thou? Then thou shalt teach me to atone.

[*Rises; puts down* ELIZABETH.

What is this plaintive note? All's merry here
Till mother comes to chide us.

QUEEN. At noon you parted with me at Whitehall,
Nor word nor sign have come since then to say
How thou hast fared at Westminster. *Fi donc!*
I had your pledge to hear within an hour.

KING. Ill news, my love, doth post so fast itself,

Doth like infection run from street to street,
There was no need of special messenger.

QUEEN. Ill news! I have heard nothing—simply nothing.

There was I waiting, ever waiting—waiting,
All sleepless, cheerless; listening, until hearing,
Like the poor hares grew to the pitch of pain.
My eyes so strained with watching, till each shadow
That flitted on the wall did flit at last
Across my heart; a hope—and then—a pang.

KING. Dear heart! Now all is over and at rest.

QUEEN. At rest! *Non, non!* Some dreadful thing has happened.

This morning, as my coach passed Westminster,
The people—those who only yester-week
Did greet me with the hearty English cheers,
Now, as I passed, cried "Papist! Jesuit!"
Ah! I had less of terror than of grief.
What have I done? All London is in riot!

KING. Nay, look around. There is no riot here.
"The mack'rel clouds that float above us, wage
"Their mute and mimic battles on the blue;
"No fever in the pulses of old Thames;
"Wholesome and sweet the breezes, like wise councils,"
A wondrous peace walks through the leafy chasms
Of Hampton groves. Nature and we alike
Keep peaceful holiday.

ELIZABETH. Now father! Go on, go on.

KING. "*So, on a time, it pleased the king*
A question thus to move,
Which of his daughters to his grace
Could show the dearest love;"

ELIZABETH. Ah! I know which—Cordelia!

KING. Listen! listen!
"*To whom the eldest thus began:*
'*Dear father mine,*' *quoth she,*
'*Before your face, to do you good,*
My blood shall rendered be.'"

QUEEN (*interrupting*). How canst thou sit and tell old foolish tales
When it behoves thee to be up and doing?
Some letters have arrived of worthiest note.

KING. A moment, Mary, pray:
"*And so* I *will, the second said,*
Dear father, for thy sake."

QUEEN. Nay, come with me and I will read the letters.

KING. "*The worst of all extremities*
I'll gladly undertake."

QUEEN. Listen, and I will read them. *O! il me fâche!*

KING. Letters from where?

QUEEN. From Paris—Florence—Rome!

KING. Mary, our English land is Protestant!
These Jesuit whisperings from beyond the sea,
Let the wind carry them to whence they came;

The guiding star of thy true love for me
Is good to steer by; these intriguing priests
Must find some other agent than my queen.

ELIZABETH. Go on, dear father. Prithee, mother, listen!

KING. "*In doing so you glad my soul,*
The aged king replied;
But what say'st thou, my youngest girl,
In whom I most confide?"

ELIZABETH. I'll be Cordelia!

JAMES. No, no; that will I.

KING. "'*My love,*' *quoth young Cordelia,* '*then,*
Which to your grace I owe,
Shall be the duty of a child,
And that is all I'll show.'"

ELIZABETH. Now the old foolish king; go on, go on.

KING. "'*And wilt thou show no more?*' *quoth he,*
'*Than doth*'"—

QUEEN. Lord Moray is arrived. If he consulted
My good contentment, he had stayed away.

KING. "'*And wilt thou show no more?*' *quoth he*"—

QUEEN. What does Lord Moray here?

KING. To-day we rest,
The wind is fair, and we will float to Richmond,
Returning with the tide. Moray will join us,
And, if we may prevail, thou and thy dame—

QUEEN. *A la bonne heure!* When Catherine comes back
To curl my hair, and when Mathilde returns

To make my *toilette*. When Picot is here,
And Jullien to attend upon the Queen—

KING. Children, go watch the barge, 'twill be in sight;
Nay, sweethearts, tarry not. The tale will keep.

[*The Children exeunt.*

QUEEN. Is this fit treatment for King Henri's child?
I've not forgotten my first welcome here,
As a young bride, new to the English court,
Was mark'd by insult: all my goodly suite
At instance of the Duke, were *chassé* forth.
Now all my faithful menials thou hast banish'd,
'Tis like I'll hear no more my native tongue.

KING. Come hither, little wife, and bring thy grievance,
Or if thine heart be full, still vent thine anger;
A word will presently explain it all.

QUEEN. There is a thing thy Commons do not love,
And I, *ma foi*, I also love it not.

KING. What is this monster? Have the prating pack
Of *mounseers* left the plague behind them?

QUEEN. The royal favourite is the worst of plagues.
You do not like my French. *Bien!* they are gone.
I do not like your Scotch. Let Moray go.

KING. This is the same old jealousy revived
Which troubled thee with our dear Buckingham.
Put it away from thee!

QUEEN. Compare them not.

The Duke was faithful, if incapable;
This man is both incapable and faithless.

KING. I would that all were as discreet and loyal.

QUEEN. I'll tell thee when thy Moray will be loyal,
And I can tell thee when he'll prove a traitor.
When thou dost flourish and the sun is shining,
Then Moray's loyalty, worn like his feather,
Insults the very air with flaunting challenge.
But should rebellion thrive, and danger-clouds
Rise in the sky, then Moray will be false.

KING. And my wife, Mary—is she wholly faithful?

QUEEN (*tenderly*). Dear love! When all goes well I may be froward;
But in thy trouble, rest thou on my heart,
And thou shalt hear the trusty tune it plays.

KING (*embracing her*). I know 'tis so; I hear its music now.
Ah! Mary, little dost thou know the harm
A careless word hath done me. Thou art not
As close of council as the wife of Brutus.

QUEEN. *Bon Dieu!* What have I said—what have I done?

KING. Thy tongue hath given the King his first defeat.
When to the Commons yesterday I went
To banish from the House, and to impeach
Those rebel Members for their Scottish plots,
The hope of my success lay in surprise.

One hint, and, like a flock of piping curlews,
They had been up and flown: and so it happen'd.
Thou didst not keep my secret.

QUEEN. I do protest!
C'est impossible! No, I could not tell it.

KING. Reflect!

QUEEN. I might have hinted it to Eleanor.

KING. Ay, Eleanor! Maid Catherine was by,
She gives it to the greedy ears of Jullien;
Jullien skips off and tells thy courier Picot—
So runs the genealogy of mischief—
And pick-thank Picot tells it to the town.
No more French monkeys here, or prating parrots!

QUEEN. Ah! Charles; I fear thou wilt not trust me more.

KING. In faith, with no more secrets.
Mary, a secret in a woman's breast
Is like a thistle on a windy day,
Which wafts off many couriers of down,
Till all the flower, in hints, is filch'd away.
I knew a woman once who kept a secret,
One told it her about the fall of noon:
And still she kept it until supper bell,
And, wondrous woman, till she went to bed!
Her gossip was to come hot-foot i' the morn:
I do not say she would have told it then.
Poor soul! she never told it—that night she died.

QUEEN. And must I never share thy counsels more?

KING. Think freely, Mary: thought will not betray:
Thought is a stag that scours the far blue hills,—
The tongue, a poor train'd cob that jogs along
And keeps his side of the way. Oh, guard thy tongue.

Enter Lord HUNTLEY.

Good-morrow, countryman. What! booted haste?

HUNTLEY. My liege, I have to crave your gracious pardon
For this intrusion on your privacy.

KING (*to Queen*). One moment, sweetheart; prithee join the children. [*Exit* QUEEN.
What mischief's in the wind?

HUNTLEY. My liege, 'tis briefly told. I fear me much
Your Majesty by one bold act has added
Five martyrs to the blessed muster roll.

KING. Thou meanest those five Members who escaped me?

HUNTLEY. Those truant Members who remain'd at home,
Advisèd of your Majesty's intentions,
Do now return to Westminster like victors,
Escorted by a host of swarthy seamen
And broad-beam'd citizens, irate and blown,
" Who yoke them to the bowing victims' coaches,
" And cheer and toss their steeple hats aloft."

My coach was forced to stop till they had pass'd,
So choked was every street. I have some drops
Of angry Scottish blood, and I stood up
And cried "God save the King!"
By our Lady! on the panels of the coach
A hundred cudgels rang. But that they saw
My sword was bare and ready (though indeed
Hot Master Hampden bade them keep the peace),
I might—

KING. I might have lost a very trusty servant,
But be briefer, pray.

"HUNTLEY. I crave your gracious pardon. I profess
"It was a sight to make the loyal grieve;—
"The houses either side, all noisy pageant,
"Of banners, braveries of guilds and companies,
"Triumphal arches, and a glut of flags!

"KING. Oh! be not bellman to their fooleries."
What does it mean?

HUNTLEY. A triumph to the Commons.
These Members, late but factious malcontents,
Are now the laurell'd heroes of the hour.
But it will pass. The people are possess'd
Of a new-fangled grievance, "Breach of Privilege!"
And all the hive is in a buzzing frenzy.
The barber ties his kerchief on his pole
Hies forth, and bellows "Breach of Privilege!"
The city wench catches the learned words:

And the young children standing on tiptoe,
Babble and squeak out, "Breach of Privilege!"

KING. Ay, Huntley, thus a party cry is born.
That airy captain of all mischiefs!
That fiend that rides the air before a mob,
And becks them on to burn, and slay, and pillage.
It serves for lack of brains—it fills all voids
Of conscience, reason, pity, loyalty!
This bitter leaven of all dormant treason,
This evil charm to conjure up the devil!
Woe to the demagogues who send it forth!
Dost thou see danger?

HUNTLEY. My liege, had I the honour of your counsel,
Before you met your Commons with defiance
I would have prayed upon my bended knee—

KING. I know not what is in the air of Westminster
That treason cannot enter and be seated,
Ay, on the Speaker's chair!
The Commons are but men, some knaves, some honest.
If then I find upon a bright escutcheon
A speck of foulness; if, amongst my Commons,
I find some traitors, where's the privilege
Should shelter them from their offended King?

HUNTLEY. Under your favour, good my liege, themselves
Most willingly, if formally address'd,
Would cite these members to a full account.

But there are privileges—

KING. Huntley, yes—

Which swell from day to day. Where is their limit?
I see them, like the Netherlandish sea,
Rise grey and sullen, level with the sea-moles,
Stealing the soil by their insidious wash,
Eating through iron clamp, till by new fissures,
They enter with a silent fatal leakage
To flood the land; yea, sweep away the throne.

HUNTLEY. Nay, nay, your Majesty, your faithful Commons,
"Though throwing forth a late luxuriant growth
"Which might be better for the pruning-knife,"
Know well their roots are in the Constitution,
Of which the King is head. If an old servant
May venture—

KING. Freely speak.

HUNTLEY. Some royal acts,
Too premature, savouring of elder reigns,
Before the birth of English liberty—
The ship-money, forced loans, and subsidies—

KING. Within Blay harbour rode our merchant ships;
The French in time of peace seize on our goods:
Methinks this thing doth touch the English honour.
The King, the guardian of the English honour,
Would raise a fleet to fright encroaching neighbours,

Would levy taxes to maintain an army,
If only to protect our trade and homesteads.
And never to forget our nation's history,
Where is no record of unpunish'd insult!
Under such challenge and just cause of war,
Methinks the humblest ploughman in my realm
Would clench his fist and clap me down his groat,
For king, for country, for our cherish'd homes!

HUNTLEY. I long have hoped to be an humble instrument
Of aid and comfort to your Majesty.
To show you something more than blind devotion.
To this end I have compass'd the acquaintance
And conversation of one Master Cromwell,
A leader in the Commons, and yet liberal.

KING. I know him by report: a shrewd, strong gentleman,
Whose shrewdness and whose strength, methinks, are venal.

HUNTLEY. In that your Majesty may do him wrong.
But be that as it may. I do profess
I come not, an officious go-between,
But as an indirect and easy medium.

KING. I cannot say thy visit is more welcome.
What then?

HUNTLEY. Shall I bear back to Master Cromwell
The spirit of your Majesty's reply?

KING. Saint George, forbid! Henry, of lusty memory,

Thy reign was set in happier days than mine!
Sooth, when thine anger flash'd, thy thunderous voice
Announced it roundly. Huntley, we must temporize—
Thou hast not come as an official here,
And so thy message back commits us not.
Stay! Prithee tell them—nay, let's see—let's see.

HUNTLEY. Under your favour—

KING. Nay, under yours,—I do bethink me now;—
Thou shouldst have told me earlier in our talk.—
Say that the King repents his hasty act;
So we avoid that first rash burst of blame,
Which sudden measures, howsoever wholesome,
Provoke in England.
Let the five Members sit as heretofore—
(Our charges shall be laid most formally)—
And let them bide the verdict of their peers.
As for their late remonstrance—tell my Commons
It is before us, and shall be consider'd
Most anxiously, and, point by point, discuss'd.
Some we shall cede at once, in other some
We shall require their counsel and review.
We must be crafty for an honest end.
The path seems crooked while we toil along it,
But left in distance, all the petty curves
Melt from the vision, it looks straight and fair.
Then let old Justice Time assoilzie us;
Time is the tardy advocate of kings.

Enter Lord MORAY.

KING. Ah! Moray, welcome. Come to join our holiday?

HUNTLEY (*going—returns*). My liege, I should not be a faithful watchman,
Should I reserve what is not sweet to speak.

[MORAY *retires.*

KING. Say'st thou? I bid thee to speak candidly.

HUNTLEY. A pretty victory in vulgar minds
Breeds such a world of arrogance. Thy Commons
Now vaguely rate at evil counsellors;
And have drawn up an humble supplication
That—my Lord Moray be dismiss'd from court!

KING. Now, 'fore Saint George! I know not a king's place,
If this be not the line to make a stand.
Not satisfied with crippling my prerogatives,
They would encroach upon the dearest rights
Which every private gentleman enjoys!—
They would dictate with whom to wed my children;
What friends I may select, and what discard!
In this, be blunt with them—I will not do it.

[*Going to* MORAY.

My lord, the Queen and children wait us on the bank;
A moment—I am with you. [*Exit* MORAY.
I would be call'd the King of Liberty!
I say strike every chain from off my people;

Let liberty, like crystal daylight, enter
And fill each home—illume each road and highway;
Till the King's body-guard, when he rides forth,
On either hand be Love and Loyalty!
But for these Commons—well, some silken fetters,
Or, on my life, they'll manacle their King.
Farewell, my lord.

HUNTLEY. My liege, I take my leave.

[*Exit* HUNTLEY.

Enter the QUEEN, Children, *and* MORAY.

KING (*to* MORAY). Knowest thou, my lord, what is the new demand
Of our submissive Commons?

MORAY. I am not, please your Majesty, so deep
In their designs.

KING. Ah! Moray, thou hast many enemies.

MORAY (*bowing to the* QUEEN). But *one* whose enmity can give me pain.

QUEEN. When thou hast proved thy loyalty, Lord Moray,
Thou shalt not find an enemy in me.

MORAY. Nay, put me to the proof.

KING. Thy foes in parliament
Demand from me that thou shouldst be dismiss'd
From court and favour.

MORAY (*kneeling*). So please your Majesty:
If the rich favours you have shower'd on me
Inflame a whit your subjects' jealousy,
Let it suffice I have so long been happy.
To-day dismiss me from your court and presence.
Rebellion, like the gulf which yawn'd for Rome,
Demands a victim.—Let me be your Curtius,
And leaping in the depths which threaten you,
Die for your Majesty!

"ELIZA (*aside to* QUEEN). Mother,
"My lord doth talk like King Lear's eldest daughter!"

KING (*raising* MORAY). Rise, friend; I will not give thee to the ravening pack;
I have cast many precious things to them
To stay their fatal speed! and one (*much moved*) whose name was Strafford.

QUEEN. You promised me, dear love, you would forget.

KING. Forget! Yes; so I must,
With such all-priceless blessings still my own.
True friend, dear wife and babes are left me still.
And I should laugh at Care, so hedged around.
Come, for our holiday! [*The* KING'S *barge appears.*

QUEEN. There is the barge.

KING. After long care and moil, I thirst for peace.
Yea, as the Psalmist long'd for wings t'escape;
Yea, for dove's wings to fly and be at rest.
So now the gentle sail shall be our wing;

The air we rise upon shall be sweet music;
Breathe music softly till the waves shall seem
To move in silent glamour, and the banks
Be rimm'd with rainbow, and the great sky cope
Seem like the haven we are sailing for.

[*They enter the barge, and as it moves slowly off, the curtain falls to soft music.*]

END OF ACT THE FIRST.

ACT II.

SCENE: WHITEHALL PALACE.

[*Drums heard in the distance.*]

HUNTLEY *discovered.*

HUNTLEY. Hark to the drums!
The rattle of that snake, a civil war!
There go the drums! good sooth, why, that should be
The train-bands under arms! Bad, very bad.
Had I known this betimes, I had not counsell'd
His Majesty to trust himself in London.
Had I thought it,
I should have held my tongue to Master Cromwell.
I like it not. There's mischief brewing here,
May loosen my old sword within its scabbard,
If Master Cromwell thinks to play me false.

Enter MORAY.

Good e'en to you, my lord. What news from York?

MORAY. Great news, my lord. I trow there's little cause
Of sadness, save, indeed, the risk we run
In trusting our victorious heads within
The lion's mouth.

HUNTLEY. Nay, I have heard some rumours
About a siege or battle.

MORAY. If pounding at the rebel walls of Hull
With cannon-shot be call'd a siege—why, yes;
If blows and bullets constitute a battle,
We've had enough. "Lord Huntley, there is fruit
"Stout men may pluck to-day." I tell thee, man,
I'm promised the blue ribbon.

HUNTLEY. Ah, then, my future marquis, thou art paid.
York is the King's head-quarters. The first action where?

MORAY. The first and only action was near Worcester,
When gallant Rupert hurl'd us into bloodshed.
The war, whene'er it ends, will date from then.

HUNTLEY. Alas, my lord! it dates from further back.
That fatal day of the invaded rights,
When the King flung the glove to Parliament.

MORAY. You march'd to York with our dear Queen, my lord;
How did she bear herself?

HUNTLEY. How else? A QUEEN!
Sir! when I think of it—the sleepless zeal,
The fire, (that sort which makes all bosoms blaze!)
The beauty, and the tearless fortitude—
Boadicea come to rescue Britain!
When I remember it, my eyes do smart;
I feel a choking here.

'Twas a fine progress, man! Our little Queen
Had sold her diamonds to buy soldiers with.
Some ladies, first, methinks, would sell their souls.
The gentry gave her all their plate to help her.
She never look'd so regal as when begging!

MORAY. She took a little town?

HUNTLEY. Little? I know not. Gad! She took a town.

The wall fell down before her pretty face—
As Jericho before a blare of trumpets!
And then, in her sweet broken English, sir,
She made her half-paid soldiers such a speech!
Like any general, i' faith she did,
Till they cheer'd to the echo! Sir, 'fore George!
I scarce knew whether I should laugh or cry;
I rubb'd my eyes, and thought it was a vision:
That some bright warrior-angel captain'd us,
Whose tongue yet lisp'd the language of the skies!

[*Clock chimes three-quarters.*

Enter a PAGE.

PAGE (*announcing*). The Queen!

Enter QUEEN.

QUEEN (*hurriedly*). Ah! my lord—

[*Stops suddenly, seeing* MORAY.

Nay, please you, good my lord

Attend upon the King, and wait his coming.

[*Exit* MORAY.

[*Exit Page.*

Some stranger comes to-night to see the King.
Who is't? I saw the letters; some one comes.

HUNTLEY. Well, then, your Majesty, some one *doth* come.

QUEEN. *Bon Dieu!* The King has come without a guard!

This person may bring soldiers from the Commons,
Surround the palace—carry off the King!

HUNTLEY. I' faith, they'll do it over Huntley's body—
Over the bodies of three hundred friends
Who linger, out of sight, about the palace!

QUEEN. *Quel soulagement!* My dear lord, who are they?

HUNTLEY. The loyal gentlemen of Lincoln's Inn,
And of the Temple. I have summoned them
To guard the person of his Majesty,
Unseen by him, and by his enemies,
If such there be. He must not know of it,
As it would rob his coming of its grace.

QUEEN. The good brave gentlemen! I do not mean
To stir until this visitor be gone.
I will pretend to go; but I will stay
And watch as if I had an hundred eyes.

HUNTLEY. And trust me, I shall be within a call.

QUEEN. Outside the door.

[HUNTLEY *bows, and is going.*

Hold! stay! It shall be so.

If I see danger, I will dart myself between,

And cry, "God save the King!"

HUNTLEY. It is an honest signal;

I'll pass it to our friends without. Your Majesty

Shall hear the peal of music that will follow.

QUEEN. 'Tis agreed.

Hush! I do hear the King.

Enter the KING, *attended by* MORAY *and a few Cavaliers.*

KING (*embracing* QUEEN). Why, dearest, thou hast made good speed to town.

A carrier pigeon never wing'd so straight.

"QUEEN (*as a helmet falls on stage from over the door*). Oh, Heaven! a fatal omen!

"KING. Lo! friends, good fortune has declared for us.

"This is the head-piece of a Commoner;

"And lacks the knightly visor. By Saint George!

" The omen is for us and victory!

" Do you look grave? If any gentleman

" Elects to leave a cause he reckons falling,

" Why, let him go. Those who'd abide with me—

" Take fortune fair or foul with their poor master—

" Let each advance and offer me his hand.

" Why, here's an omen! among all my friends
" There is not found a cold one.
" (*To the* QUEEN.) Now, love, what news?
" The children well? My Jamie, as I hear,
" Begins to play at soldiers; and Elizabeth—
" What, silent?
" QUEEN. Alas! we come too late! The nest is robb'd,
" They are poor little prisoners!
" KING. I did not think they waged a war on children.
" What, dear heart! do not droop. To-night may see
" An end to all these crosses; and till then
" At least they're safe." My lords, look on the Queen.
Ye little wot the dreadful character
She plays in London.
In sooth, now, does she not look dangerous?
[HUNTLEY *about to speak.*
Nay, Huntley, I foresee thy courtly jest,
And grant that danger.
But, seriously—what is the latest guise
Your gentle Queen is credited withal?
FIRST CAVALIER. A General, my liege.
KING. Stranger than that.
SECOND CAVALIER. Goddess Astrea just alit on earth?
KING. I' faith, man, hadst thou said a snake-hair'd Gorgon,
Then hadst been nearer. Sir, she is proclaimd
A traitor!

OMNES. A traitor?

HUNTLEY. By George! I saw the posted proclamation
All through the town.

KING. And signed with the King's name.

[*Kneels to* QUEEN.

And so, dear heart, I will impeach thee thus.

[*Kisses her.*

QUEEN. *Nul autre que votre Majesté n'osera me denoncer ainsi.*

KING (*rises*). Ourself will guard this traitor. Lords, good night!
You will find soldiers' quarters in the palace.

[*The Cavaliers bow, and exeunt.*

HUNTLEY (*aside, as he bows*). At six, your Majesty?

KING. I shall be ready.
Good night, dear lord.

[*Exit* HUNTLEY.

[*The* KING *goes to fireplace, and sighs.*

QUEEN. Why do you sigh?

KING. My love, I'm sad to-night.

QUEEN. Give me my share of sadness. What is it?
Just now you had such cheer. What does it mean?

KING. The King must cheer his followers' sinking hearts
Though without cheer himself.

[*Strikes bell on table.*

MORAY. An please your Majesty, if I may venture

To chide a little your despondency,
If it doth blow a tempest, yet thus far
The gale is prosperous to your Majesty.
From Edinburgh I have had advices
That you may reckon on a large adherence.
I have the letters boldly signed by all.

KING. Thanks, Moray. I accept at sight thy vouchers.

MORAY. And since 'tis wise even in fortune's heyday
Still to provide for possible retreat,
Here is a haven ever open to thee.

QUEEN. We thank you, Sir: our haven is in France.

KING. Nay, friend, if trouble beat down Charles at last,
The haven England's King shall choose is England.

MORAY. My liege, to-morrow—

Enter an Attendant.

KING (*motions courteously to* MORAY. *To Attendant*) On the stroke of six I have a visitor.
Conduct him to me by the private stair.

[*Exit the Attendant.*

To-morrow, Moray?—

MORAY. My liege, to-morrow I'll to Edinbro',
I have been promised there a large command;
And in the time it takes to march to York,
I'll bring your Majesty some stalwart comfort;
Not words—but bristling files of marching men

QUEEN. It is well done, my lord. The King will thank you,
Another time.

MORAY (*bows, goes up to door* R.) Your Majesty now credits me at last?

QUEEN. My lord, I do.

[*Exit* MORAY.

Prithee, let Moray be thy summer friend;
And I shall be thy harbinger of summer;
Thy little bird that comes in early spring
When all is cold, and sings of coming green.

KING. Mary, canst guess what brought me here to London?

QUEEN. To bring our children back?

KING. Some day our children will return to us;
But, oh, the fathers, husbands, brothers slain,
Who lie near Worcester, never will return!

QUEEN. Those who died for their King died gloriously!
And who would pity traitors?
I see no further than my husband's honour;
My grief can only stretch as far as him.
But he will triumph o'er his enemies,
Then, dearest, come to me for tears of joy.

KING. This evening, as grey London came in sight,
With a swift paleness o'er the leaning grass
Travell'd the wind, and seem'd to breathe a curse!
The very clouds did frown, and the low sun

Had rent his orange mantle o'er the city,
As in some wrathful vow at my approach.

QUEEN. 'Twas only fancy from the want of sleep.
When I woke up I saw a sky of glory.

KING. Mary, I would it were the fabled time
When kings went forth among their humblest subjects;
And I might enter at the cottage door,
And lift with timely aid the sinking man,
And take his lisping child upon my knee,
And say, "Hail! little subject; thou wilt yet
Remember thy King's look, and feel his hand
Still on thy head; and when they call him 'tyrant,'
Thou shalt warm up, and cry, 'No! the King loved us!'"

[*Chimes.—Four quarters. Clock strikes six.*

Mary, retire; nay, question not, but leave me.

[CHARLES *conducts her to door.*

QUEEN. You *do* trust me?

KING (*kisses her hand as she exits*). Trust you?
Whom else—whom else in all the world?

[CHARLES *crosses to fireplace.*

Enter Attendant.

ATTENDANT. Two gentlemen, your Majesty.

[*Exit Attendant.*

Enter CROMWELL *and* IRETON.

KING. You are welcome. Master Cromwell, I believe.

CROMWELL. The same, so please you.

KING. Pray be seated.

CROMWELL. Nay, so please you.

KING (*sitting*). I pray you.

[CROMWELL *sits.*

Lord Huntley often has commended you
As one who shews high promise of the statesman.
One, who with lusty speech can rule a throng;
Holding their passions in his hand, like reins,
To guide them, I believe and hope, to good.

CROMWELL. I cannot tell. I know not. If this meeting,
So please your Majesty, is to bear fruit,
I must not wear the muzzle of a courtier.
Under your favour, I am rough of speech,—

KING. Albeit a gentleman.

CROMWELL. And little used to kingly presence, save,
If I may dare to be so humbly bold,
That Kingly presence before whom thyself
And I are equal subjects.

KING. Sir, I do trust in this we feel alike;
Touching this meeting, I have but one motive,
And briefly, when you are possess'd of that,
Avoiding all irrelevant discourse,
Upon that issue I would challenge candour;
To touch the very nerve, howe'er it pain.

IRETON (*aside*). Ay, though the iron entereth the soul!

KING. The merit of those most unhappy questions
Which stand between me and my Parliament,
I would we left untouched; this is the past.

CROMWELL. So please you, 'tis the knot to be untied.

KING. Oh, let us not cleave through it with the sword;
With every sacrifice a King might make,
With what abasement may consist with honour;
I would avert this woful civil war.

CROMWELL (*rising—sternly*). And yet the first blood-guiltiness was thine!
Prince Rupert has already stain'd his sword;
The Queen has—

KING (*interrupting*). I pray you first—Come you in privacy,
As by Lord Huntley I have been advised,
Or with the cognizance of Parliament?

CROMWELL. At a word, I am their Ambassador!

KING (*calmly*). Oh! their Ambassador?

CROMWELL. 'Twould scarce befit
My duty or my office to be private;
So please you, as a private man, no weight
Attaches to my words, and honesty
Might pass for disrespect.

KING (*points to paper in* CROMWELL'S *hand*). That paper —What is it?

CROMWELL. Haply 'tis of some import to your Majesty,
And haply not, as this discourse may savour.

KING. Then, Sir, of it, anon.
The footing of our meeting somewhat alters;
Addressing you, am I to understand
That I address my Commons?

CROMWELL. If it so please you.

KING (*rising, and with dignity*). Then, Sir, avert the dangerous mistake—
Saving much time, and fence, and vain manœuvre—
That this, my overture, is sign of weakness.
Pray, Sir, note this; my cause is prosperous!
The good, the brave, the loyal, throng in thousands
Around my standard.
It is not, then, distrust of my good cause
Which urged me, at some risk, to seek this meeting;
But from a single motive—a pure hope,
That we, at any cost, may purchase peace.

CROMWELL. Your Majesty, I do not question it.
Toward you we are all love and tenderness,
To the confusion of your evil counsellors.
I, too, may be permitted to set forth
The vigour of your faithful Parliament,
To wit: my Lord of Essex has gone forth—
It boots not to say whither—with an army
Of fourteen thousand men, who have one mind—
The stout defence of King and Parliament!

KING. Defence, Sir, of the King?

CROMWELL. Against himself and evil counsellors!

Northumberland is Admiral of England;
And the fleet lies—where, boots it not to say.
Well mann'd, provision'd, watchful off the coast,
For the defence of King, and Parliament!

KING. Methinks to ask the King's leave were as well.

CROMWELL. The train-bands and militia wait our bidding;
And our enlistments outstrip estimate;
All animate, leaven'd with liberty,
Bold in defence of King and Parliament.

KING. Nay, Sir, enough of this—

CROMWELL. London declares for us.

KING. More shame for London!
Now, sir, be brief.

CROMWELL. Please you to hear a message from your Commons?

KING. Sir, I am at their service. Pray be seated.

CROMWELL. Your Commons who have never turn'd aside
From reconcilement with your Majesty,
Have charged me even now, with words of love.

KING. So far, Sir, it looks fair. Forgive my haste.

CROMWELL. Truly your Commons have a righteous jealousy
Of the false counsellors about your person.
Here is a goodly oak strangled with ivy!
Lop off the ivy—Lo! a stately tree!
And we accept its comfortable shade.

IRETON (*aside*). Or peradventure lay the axe to its root.
(*Aside to* CROMWELL *as he passes.*)
Nay, not too smooth with him.

KING. So far in courtesy, I have
heard you out;
To business, Sir, I pray you.
(*As he displays a parchment.*)
These are the articles, nineteen in all,
Call'd by the Commons, a remonstrance?

CROMWELL. I know it, having help'd to draw it up.
It is the same.

KING. To stay the civil war now imminent,
All these I sign and seal.

CROMWELL. So please your Majesty
And 'twere well done. Thus many grievous blunders
Shall drop from us. To quote your Majesty,
These propositions bear upon the past!

KING. Your meaning, Sir?

CROMWELL. It was, as I may say, the gracious seed-
time,
When from your hand might fall the germs of freedom,
Or the rank grain of Popery and poison.
The seeds fell anywhere, broadcast about,
Some hopeful sprouts perchance reward the sower;
But I will take the humble boldness here
To tell you, many poison-seeds were mingled:
Malignant seeds of evil counselling,

And who will now distinguish—who with candle
Of holy writ will search throughout the fields
To espy and root them out?

IRETON. And least of all,
That enemy that came and sowed the tares!

CROMWELL. Yea, who will now—?

KING. Sir, in the cloudiest sky is some faint light,
Which hints the sun behind; but through thy speech-fogs
There shines no light of true sincerity.

CROMWELL. Your Majesty invites me to be plain.
Your ill-advisers have begun the war!
Blood hath been shed, and crieth out against them.
And for your Majesty's late acts of treason—

KING (*rising in anger*). Treason! Sir, you forget. I am your King.

CROMWELL. Now thou hast set a lion in my path—
That word, 'the King'—but I will cope with it.
'The King' is a word of might
When he is a friend and father to his Commons.
The King, distinct from us, is but a simple man!

KING. Your language, Sir, swells to such insolence,
Our interview had better close at once.
You take advantage of my condescension.
'Tis not for you to limit or set forth
The rights divine of an anointed King.

CROMWELL. A people's rights! And are they not divine?

Bethink thee, what concerns the King of kings
The most—a nation, or a crowned man?

KING. The people's rights, Sir, are indeed divine;
Not so, the wrong of rebels.
The crowned man hath from the King of kings,
Received his seal and mission.

[CROMWELL *turns away incredulous.*

Dost thou scoff
At rights the hand of God Himself indorsed?
Hast thou no reverence for the marble pile
Of England's past! O Sir, 'tis such as thou,
Deface the fairest monuments of history,
Inscribing with coarse sacrilege their names
On its most sacred tablets; scarring beauty
That it took centuries to make, and but an hour to mar.

CROMWELL. I mean but this. A King has err'd ere now.
We treat this error as we treat disease—
As we might put restraint on the insane.
So, give me leave to say, we now are justified
In taking arms against thy counsellors,
And in large sense, sooth, to defend the King.

KING. Oh, sir, I've noted
When men are bent on a deliberate wrong,
They seldom are at loss to justify it;
To thieve with a most honourable pretext,

And murder with a moral.
Under the cry of evil counsellors,
You aim your thrusts at me, and call it loyalty.
So they stabb'd Cæsar for the love of Rome,
And then fell to, to cutting Roman throats!
I am responsible for all my acts.
That scroll contains— ?

CROMWELL. Further securities
And pledges to your Commons, of good faith.

KING. So, Sir; I still must yield, and yield, my rights;
Wronging ourself, and wronging our succession
Until my office is an empty shell,
And I have nothing but the name of King.

IRETON. That too, may pass, e'en as a tale that's told,
If we are put to it.

KING. Who is this rude gentleman?

CROMWELL. A gentleman of trust and piety!
[*Turns to* IRETON.
Ireton, restrain the movement of thy spirit,
For fitting time and place.
(*To* CHARLES.) Those are the propositions of the Commons,
Most humbly offer'd to your Majesty.

KING (*reads paper in muttered surprise; then aloud*).
" Lastly, that all his friends and counsellors
" Should straight be handed over, to be dealt with
" According to the strictest inquisition."

Even as you did for my good angel, Strafford!
And is this all?

CROMWELL. At present, all. More as the need shall grow.

As for the safety of your royal person,
I am commanded to assure your Majesty—

KING. Yes; my friends murder'd, I have leave to live.
[*Rising.*

No. Tender thou my thanks to Parliament.
Our interview is ended.

CROMWELL (*to the* KING). Pray you a moment?
Ireton, give us room.

[IRETON *retires up at back.*

Your Majesty in our commenced discourse,
Was pleased to bear your gracious testimony
To the most modest weight and influence,
"Humble in outward show, albeit more felt,
"Because it underlies—I say th' acknowledged weight"
My voice and vote obtain'd in Westminster.

KING. Well, sir: well, well?

CROMWELL. I speak that I do know, the humble burgess
Of Cambridge hath a reach which doth extend
(Within the bounds of conscience) to the aid
And comfort of your gracious Majesty,
Yea, to the restitution of thy shorn prerogative.

KING. What's your price?

CROMWELL. Your Majesty is much too short with me.

I do not say that I have any price.

KING. Then, Sir, your motive?

CROMWELL. In pointing to your Majesty's just rights,

If I might venture, I would couple mine.

KING. I'm at a loss—

CROMWELL. The Earl of Essex, General of the Commons,

Is without issue, nor is ever like.

By four descents I draw my pedigree

Straight from Joan Cromwell, who was only sister

To the first Earl of Essex, Thomas Cromwell,

Who married Morgan Williams.

KING. Well, Sir, well?

CROMWELL. Their son retain'd the noble name of Cromwell;

Heaven knows I say not this vainglorіously.

KING. Well, Sir?

CROMWELL. Should Essex die—that cold friend to the King—

KING. Sir—if I see your drift—and yet such arrogance

May well surpass belief. I—

CROMWELL. I mean nothing, nothing—*nothing!*

If Essex die still have the Commons generals,

That's all I mean.

KING. And hast thou borne till now so bold a front,

And look'd me in the face, this in thy heart?

So, the demands and troubles of my people
Before they reach me, filter through a medium
Both faithless and corrupt.
Send me some fearless, honourable man,
And let him tell me all the round of wrongs
My people suffer. I will take that scroll
And place it on the altar of my memory,
Till with a bounteous will all be redress'd.
But for this false concoction of pure malice,
Brought to me here by such a messenger—
Thee, who dost truckle for the wealth and title
Which you denounce so roundly from the hustings,—
A mouthing patriot with an itching palm,
In one hand menace, in the other greed—
For such a lie its proper place is there.

[*Dashes paper on floor and stamps on it.*

There is a trust placed in my hands by God;
I will not barter it to hirelings!

CROMWELL. If we be hirelings, we do not flee
When the wolf cometh. Yea, we shall stand fast.
Treaties on treaties have we offer'd thee;
And thou hast palter'd with us year by year.
"Thou chosen champion of our holy Church
"Hath ope'd the back door to the Jesuit.
"Thy letters have been seized upon the sea,
"And out of thine own lips shall we impeach thee:
"Thou art the rotten keystone in the arch

"Of English liberty. Thou art the patch
"On our new garment—
"Beware, or we shall hew that keystone out;
"Take heed, or we shall rend that patch away,
"And cast it in the fire, if needs we must!"

[*Puts on his hat.*

KING. Uncover in the presence of your King!

[*Cromwell sullenly uncovers.*

Under your favour, Sir, you have spoke much,
Too much, and with a noisy licence here
Had cost a better gentleman his head.
Thou hast done more to brace my arm anew
And raise my sinking heart, than thou canst wot of.
If I believed by yielding up my Crown,
Peace would descend on this unhappy land,
I think—I know, I should not shrink from it.
But now the sacrifice were worse than vain.
Now thou art pleased to drop thy patriot mask
Methinks I see a modern Attila!
One, who if once our dynasty should wane,
Would rally to the front with iron truncheon;
A tyrant, maundering and merciless;
Anarch of Liberty! At heart a slave!
A scourge, the Commons' plait to lash themselves.
A heel to tramp their constitution down.
Thou and thy dupes have driven me to war,
And on thy conscience fall its fell account!

CROMWELL. Charles Stuart! Thyself shalt bear this message back. [IRETON *beckons on Soldiers.*

KING. Traitor! Is this thy faith? [*draws his sword.*

CROMWELL. Advance! Do him no violence.

KING (*throwing down his sword*). I am alone! and will not call my friends.

Which of you touches his anointed King?

[*Soldiers hold back.*

CROMWELL (*drawing*). In God's name, that will I.

Enter the QUEEN.

QUEEN (*waving her handkerchief*). God save the King!

Enter HUNTLEY *and strong force of Cavaliers.*

CAVALIERS. God save the King!

[CROMWELL *and his soldiers form on one side.*
HUNTLEY *and the Cavaliers on the other.*]

END OF ACT THE SECOND.

ACT III.

SCENE: THE QUEEN'S TENT NEAR NEWARK.

[*Sounds of distant cannon.*]

The QUEEN *discovered.*

QUEEN. Those fatal sounds! so thick, so dread, so heavy.
Ah! how can he survive?
At every sullen echo of the fight
I start in such an ecstasy of terror,
My fears will rob his armour of its proof,
Direct the furious sword thrusts to its chinks,
And make his breast a target for the shot.
What shall I do? Oh! I must act or stir.
There is an agony in idleness.
I'll write down all I think
To show to him when he comes back to me.

[*Distant cannon.*

The voice of fate was in that dreadful sound.
Methought I saw him reeling from his horse;
The beauty of his face eclipsed in blood!
I must do something, or methinks I'll die.
The fight—it is at Grantham? Where is Grantham?

[*Goes for, and examines a map. Cannon heard; she dashes map away.*]

Eleanor! Lady Eleanor! Come quick.

Enter Lady ELEANOR *from tent.*

ELEANOR. Your Majesty call'd?

QUEEN. Yes, come, sit you near.
I'm not afraid; but I am somewhat anxious.
I do believe that thou canst read the future.
Canst see what's passing far away from us?

ELEANOR. Your Majesty, I can, having foreseen it.

QUEEN. By the stars?

ELEANOR. By the stars.

QUEEN. Quick, tell me by thy powers
How fares the King?

ELEANOR. Pray you permit me, [*mysteriously*]
Saturn's conjunction
With Mars was on the—Ah! I do remember.
The King comes back to thee safe and unhurt.

QUEEN. Oh! thou art good to me. I see thy skill.
Thou art more skilful far than Master Lilly,
Though he be famous! Will he be victorious?

ELEANOR. A moment! The configuration of Mars
With Mercury shows—stay, let me see. Again
The configuration of Mars with Mercury
In his first house. Marry, that's good! that's good!

QUEEN. How skill'd thou art!

ELEANOR. Alas! this dreadful influence of Saturn.
Your Majesty must question me no more.

QUEEN. No more! What mean you, Eleanor? oh, Eleanor!

ELEANOR. I must repeat it: ask me, pray, no more.
Alas! there be no thanks for evil news.

QUEEN (*angrily*). What mummery is this. Thou hast no gift!
Dar'st thou—this is the manner of imposture
To put a myst'ry on. O Eleanor,
Thou'st stabb'd me to the heart; stolen all my courage.

ELEANOR. When I speak pleasant things, your Majesty
Commends my skill; but when their hap is evil,
I'm an impostor. This is somewhat hard!

QUEEN. I know not what I do. Oh! pardon me.

ELEANOR. Take comfort yet, for further I foretell
Your Majesty shall long survive the King,
And lead a prosperous happy life in France.

QUEEN. Prosperous and happy — and survive the King!
It is a lie! as plain as if you said
The heavens shall be when all the stars are dead.
Dost call this comfort?
The prayer of all my married life has been—
And I will pray the Virgin day and night—
That I should die before his Majesty.
Robert! Where is my page?

[*Enter a Page.*

Art thou brave, Robert? Art afraid of aught?
Nay, pardon; I do like that smile of thine.

Take thou this jewel; sometime 'twill bear honour,
As gain'd in the dear service of thy mistress.
Ride to the battle-field—go not too near;
But gather news for me. Strain thy young eyes
To see the King. Look to the van of battle,
For he'll be there, then hie thee back to me
With news—good news! I thirst—I faint for news.

[*Exit Page.*

Oh! that my spirit could fly forth with him,
And like this favour'd boy speed to the spot
Where strives that dear one face to face with death.
I'd float above his crest with viewless hands,
And gird him so, and turn the whistling balls.
Like the big raindrops, my quick ghostly kisses
Would fall upon his cheek, half kiss, half tear.
But when he charges, in the rushing pant
Of wind, across his ear would come my whisper,
And sound like joyful shouts of victory.

ELEANOR. Your Majesty should try to sleep awhile.
You have not rested since your journey hither.

QUEEN. Sleep! Eleanor, couldst sleep upon the rack?

ELEANOR. Now please your Majesty, I pray you try;
A soldier like your Majesty should sleep
At any moment. Rest upon this couch.

QUEEN. *Eh bien!* I'll try. Perhaps I might awake
And find him at my pillow. Blessed waking!

[*Reclines on couch in tent.*

Enter MORAY *and* IRETON *in conversation from* L. U. E.; *they speak in a low subdued tone.*

MORAY. Ireton, I do repent. I cannot do it.
I have withheld from him my promised aid,
Because 'twould but prolong a desperate strife.
I will not, though you build a golden pyramid
Before my tent, betray my royal master.

IRETON. Brave words, my lord, and see thou hold to them.
Thy troops prevent our falling on his rear,
Thy tents are here a haven for his wreck.
But even now Lord Fairfax beats him down;
E'en now, methinks, the steady firing breaks,
And I can hear the sounds of utter rout.
Before thee, the victorious front of Fairfax,
And in thy rear the Ironsides of Cromwell.
Lord Leven and Lord Lothian deem it awkward.
What thinkest thou, Lord Moray?

MORAY. Do not tempt me.

IRETON. Thou wert the nearest of his counsellors,
And but for his protection, long ago
Thou wouldst have been a victim. Thou art lost!

MORAY. Aye! His protection!

IRETON. Thou shalt be hunted by them like a wolf!
Thy sands are numbering—decide at once.

MORAY. Where shall I live, and whither shall I fly?
The loyal Scots will curse me for this deed.

IRETON. Lord Lothian and Lord Leven will not curse thee.

As for thy flight—those fifty thousand pounds
Thou sharest with them (if all that weight of gold
Will not retard thee), those shall be thy wings.

MORAY. Nay, talk not of the gold. I'll do it? Leave me!

IRETON. Be firm!

[*Exit* IRETON.

QUEEN (*rousing from slumber*). Eleanor! hear'st thou voices?

ELEANOR. Only the gossip of the sentinels.

QUEEN. Nay, there were sounds as ominous to me
As when there breaks upon the traveller's vigil
The rustle of a tiger in the jungle.
Some enemy—some traitor is without.

ELEANOR. Nay, nay, it seem'd to me a pleasant voice.

QUEEN. I have an instinct passes prophecy.

[*The Queen steps from tent and encounters* MORAY, *who advances abstractedly.*]

What hast thou done?

MORAY (*starts, confused*). Nothing, your Majesty.

QUEEN. Then why art thou not fighting by thy King,
Instead of whispering here, without the tent?

MORAY. I did not think your Majesty was here.

QUEEN. Thank Heav'n, I was. I say, what hast thou done.

MORAY. Your Majesty's suspicions pain me sorely.

QUEEN. Pain *you!* My lord, I do not think of you
When I would sweep an asp from the King's path.
Who was that Roundhead talk'd with thee but now?

MORAY. Truly your Majesty, you do me wrong.
I have been tempted—I confess to this;
But I repell'd him with indignant scorn.

QUEEN. Look in my face! That sin so heinous black
Should blush more darkly than the Ethiop.
Thine eyes more honest than thy tongue will blab it,
Before you think look up, Sir, if you dare.

MORAY (*encountering her gaze*). What seest thou in my face?

QUEEN. I do not see
The virtue of a blush; but I can read
Thy heart.

[*Trumpet. Enter a Page hastily.*

PAGE. The King! he rides in desperate haste.

QUEEN. *Bon Dieu!* he's safe—he's safe! I ask no more.

MORAY (*excitedly*). Let not the King come here! Ah, Heaven, too late!

Enter CHARLES, HUNTLEY, *and followers, in armour.*

KING. Lord Moray! Where is he? Dear love, thou here?

QUEEN. *Grâce à Marie!* safe and unwounded back.

KING. I cannot speak to thee, dear heart. Be patient.
Some call Lord Moray.

QUEEN. I must speak with thee.
Beware of—

KING (*seeing* MORAY). Ah! Moray, at the sight of thy true face
I breathe again. A map! Ho! there—a map!

[*Goes into tent.*

Give me some water!
The battle's almost desperate with us.
We still make head against the lines of Fairfax;
But any moment all may be in rout.

[*Looks over map.*

Oh, mark you here.
See here, between this town and Nottingham
Prowls Cromwell marching thro' his native fens.
I had it from our scouts that he is near.
If he attack our rear, as sure he will,
Eluding the Scots army, all is lost!
Here—ay, the road—and there methinks it curves
Around these fens. Here he is like to be.
Now, now, the troops you promis'd. I will meet him.

MORAY (*embarrassed*). Your Majesty—

KING. What would you say, dear friend?
Without, ho! Sound the call to arms! fresh horses!
Priceless is every passing moment. Haste!

QUEEN. Charles, one word—

KING. Pardon, not now, my love.
(*To* MORAY.) Why dost thou tarry? Moray, dost thou sleep
When brave men die?

MORAY. My liege—Oh, let these tears
Speak for me now. I know not what to say.

KING. Say nothing, man; or let thy speech be brief.
It is an hour when words should be like blows.

MORAY. Lord Lothian and Lord Leven both intend
To make good terms—

KING. Wouldst drive me mad? Good terms!
Lord Lothian! Haste! The troops you promised me.

MORAY. I would, my liege, I knew the words would soothe you.

KING. Thou soothest me as little as a dream
Of water soothes the swollen tongue of fever.
I tell thee, man, I dare not credit now
All the cold comfort written in thine eyes.

MORAY. I must explain—a few words will suffice.

KING. Dost know the price of every idle word?
A precious, precious life! Thy slow excuse
Is echo'd yonder by a true man's groan.
The troops you promised me!

MORAY. The Scots are faithful! If your Majesty
Would let me tell them you embrace the Covenant.

KING. I only know our covenant of honour.
The troops you promised!

MORAY. Nay, your Majesty—

KING. The troops you promised!

MORAY. 'Tis impossible.

KING. Sorer than Marston Moor or fatal Naseby
Is this last blow!

QUEEN. Away with me! We stand upon a pitfall.
Let us ride hence at once, and we are safe.

KING (*to* MORAY). How canst thou treat me thus, and meet to-morrow?
Thou standest there twisting thy hands and trembling,
The very picture of a fickle spirit
Who would, but dare not, be an honest man.

QUEEN. The ship that brought me here lies still at Dover,
In France you shall refit, and find support.

KING. Peace, Mary. I am here for life or death!
I grow here by a hundred bleeding roots.
My friends who shed their blood for me to-day;
How can I tear myself from such dear soil?
(*To* MORAY.) Wilt wait, man, till thy King sheds tears of blood,
If his words move thee not?

MORAY. My liege, Lord Leven is commander here.

KING. Commander-in-chief am I! who is Lord Leven,
When I, the King of Scots, do summon thee?

QUEEN. There yet is time. Alas! why rest thy foot
Upon that quicksand.

KING (*to* MORAY). I'll not believe thee false. Give me thy hand
Thou art young to die. Thy company I ask not;
It is my hour, not thine, to win or lose.
Fulfil thy pledge, and if I live through it
As Heaven doth hear me in this piteous hour,
Choose from my hand the gift that tempts thee most,
Of title, wealth, or honour—thou shalt have it.
And in the annals of my hapless reign
I'll set this faithful action jewel-bright—
How Moray kept his promise to the King,
And saved the throne of England!

MORAY. I can but try—
Your Majesty I go—

KING. Away! all is not lost!

As MORAY *hurries off, enter* CROMWELL, IRETON, *and Soldiers.*

HUNTLEY (*intercepting* MORAY). Nay, thou shalt weather out thy villainy.

KING (*to* CROMWELL). What means thy presence here?

CROMWELL. Your Majesty hath fallen into the toils—
Thy *friend* delivers thee into our hands.

KING. Am I thy prisoner?

CROMWELL (*bowing*). Your Majesty shall meet with all respect.
In the ungracious duty thrown upon me

I shall be very fain, if I may venture,
To show a tender and respectful sympathy.

KING. I thank you, Sir, and if you be sincere,
I pray you, let Lord Huntley mount at once
And post to yonder field to stop the bloodshed.

CROMWELL. 'Tis over. We expect Lord Fairfax presently.

KING. My friends, Sir. What of them?

CROMWELL. Towards them, your Majesty, I owe no duty.
Your friends are routed and pursued with slaughter.

KING. Have they no quarter, sir?

[CROMWELL *shrugs his shoulders.*

My friends all slaughter'd—I alive!

CROMWELL. My good Lord Moray, we have understood
Lords Leven, Lothian, and thyself are nice
About the payment! You must have all gold!

MORAY (*embarrassed*). Sir—I—nothing—I protest.

CROMWELL. Such weight of metal on our broken roads
Will travel slowly; and we English brook not
That in our land your locust army tarry;
The country clamours for relief from it.
Moreover, I require that you make good
To the poor husbandmen for robbery
From pen and hen-roost by thy Scottish foxes.
But have full confidence thy gold shall reach thee
For this thou hast our honour!

MORAY. Lothian and Leven may divide the gold—
I'll none of it. Prithee talk lower, sir.

CROMWELL. Say you? (*Aloud.*) Divide your booty as you please,
Your bribes are ready, and your names are sign'd
The Lord deliver me from such a junto!

KING. Pardon me if I mused. What is your will?

CROMWELL. If it be pleasing to your Majesty,
By easy stages we proceed to-night
To reach within the week your house at Holmby.

KING. Truly I put your kindness to the test.

CROMWELL. Your Majesty must teach me.

KING. Let those few friends about my person here
Have liberty and conduct to depart.

CROMWELL. On my responsibility I grant it—
Gentlemen, you are free. Depart in peace.

HUNTLEY. Not I, Sir. Never was a Gordon known
To leave his master in extremity.

KING (*to* HUNTLEY). Old friend! I dare not speak too much of thanks
Lest tears brim over and betray my weakness.
(*To* CROMWELL.) But, Sir—my wife—the Queen?

QUEEN. Nay, speak not so—
(*To* CROMWELL.) I am not Queen, but wife!
I'd liefer share his sorrow than his throne.
I go with him!

KING. Then all is said, Sir. Shall we close this scene?

CROMWELL. We would not incommode your Majesty;
But it grows late—and there's an idle form—

[*Points to* CHARLES'S *sword.*

KING. Sir, I can understand—one moment yet.

[CROMWELL *bows and goes up.*

(*To* MORAY.) Charles Moray! I had meant to go in silence;
But pain o'ermasters me and I must speak.
Come nearer.

[MORAY *approaches with downcast head, and gradually sinks on his knee before the* KING, *during his speech.*]

I saw a picture once by a great master,
'Twas an old man's head.
Narrow and evil was its wrinkled front—
Eyes close and cunning; a dull vulpine smile.
'Twas called a Judas! Wide that painter erred.
Judas had eyes like thine, of candid blue;
His skin was smooth, his hair of youthful gold;
Upon his brow shone the white stamp of truth;
And lips like thine did give the traitor kiss!
The King, My father, loved thine—and at his death
He gave me solemn charge to cherish thee.
And I have kept it to my injury.
It is a score of years since then, my lord,

Hast waited all this time to pay me thus?

[CHARLES *turns to* CROMWELL.

Sir, you demand my sword. I yield it you!

END OF ACT THE THIRD.

ACT IV.

SCENE: WHITEHALL PALACE.

CROMWELL *discovered seated.*

CROMWELL. On me and on my children!
So said the voice last night! A lying dream!
This blood—this blood on me and on my children?
It is my wont to feel more heartiness
When face to face with action. But this deed
Doth wrap itself in doubt and fearfulness.
Do I weel to confront him at this hour,
Even when yon scaffold waiteth for its victim,
And his pale face doth look like martyrdom?
I will not. Out upon my sinking heart!
The standard-bearer fainteth, and my followers
Grow slack. I'll hie me to them.—
And yet, if by the granting him his life
He abdicate—no shifts—he abdicate!
Then—then this offer of the Prince of Wales—
This young Charles Stuart—he in our absolute power,
As he doth promise if we spare his father.
Why if he come— I had not thought of that,—
Both son and father given to our hands:
Then have we scotched the snake!

Enter an Attendant, who hands CROMWELL *a letter.*

ATTENDANT. My Lord-General—from the King!

[*Exit Attendant.*

CROMWELL (*reads the letter*). "*Declines to see me!*"
Well—well—
"*His last hour disturb'd!*" It shall be thy last hour.
"*As touching the Prince of Wales's noble*
"*offering of himself for me. Look back*
"*on my past life, and thou art answer'd!*"
Past life! full of deceit and subtle carriage.
"*I pardon thee and all mine enemies,*
"*and may Heaven pardon them!*"
What now doth stay to rend away this patch
On our new garment.
England! one hour—grey tyranny is dead!
And in this hand thy future destiny.

Enter the QUEEN.

Madam, my daughter hardly did prevail
That I should grant you this last interview.
It must be brief and private, or I warn you
I cannot answer for your safe return.

QUEEN (*aside*). *Sainte Vierge, aidez moi!* This is the man who holds
My husband's life within his hands. Ah! could I—
Sainte Marie, inspirez moi, mettez votre force dans mes prières.

I see him as the drowning swimmer sees
The distant headland he can never reach.
Sir, do not go. I wish to speak to you.

CROMWELL. Madam, I wait.

QUEEN. Oh, Sir! the angels wait and watch your purpose:
Unwritten history pauses for your deed,
To set your name within a shining annal,
Or else to brand it on her foulest page!

CROMWELL. Madam, 'tis not for me to answer you.
And for unwritten history—thou nor I
Can brief it in our cause; 'twill speak the truth!
England condemns the King, and he shall die!

QUEEN. Oh, pity! pity! Hast a human heart?
How canst thou look at me so cruelly?
I look for pity on thy stubborn cheek
As I might place a mirror to dead lips
To find one stain of breath.
The brightest jewel ever set in crown
Were worthless to the glisten of one tear
Upon thy lid—one faint hope-star of mercy.
Be merciful! A queen doth kneel to thee.

CROMWELL. Not to me! Nor am I now
A whit more moved because thou art a queen!

QUEEN. I am no queen; but a poor stricken woman,
On whom this dreadful hour is closing in.

[*Chimes the half-hour.*

Dost hear the clock? Each second quivering on
Is full of horror for both thee and me.
Endless remorse *thy* doom, and sorrow mine.

CROMWELL. Madam, no more. I shall have no remorse
For an unhappy duty well perform'd.

QUEEN. Thou call'st it duty; but all heaven and earth
Shall raise one outraged cry, and call it murder;
It shall be written right across the clouds
In characters of blood till Heaven hath judged it.

CROMWELL. Nay, you forget: the righteous cause doth prosper.
If this be crime, the hand of Heaven not in it,
Then had thy husband flourish'd; on our side
God's heavy judgment fallen, shame and slaughter!

QUEEN. God speaketh not in thunder when he judges,
But in the dying moans of those we treasure.
And in the silence of our broken hearts!
Thou hast a daughter, and her cheek is pale;
Her days do balance between life and death.
Whether they wither or abide with thee.
Let him be cruel who hath none to love;
But let that father tremble who shall dare
Widow another's home! She loves the King.
Take now his sacred life, and hie thee home.
Smile on her, call her to thee, she will linger.
Ask for thy welcome, she will give it thee!
A shudder as she meets thee at the door;

A cry as thou wouldst think to touch her lips;
A sickening at thy guilty hands' caress!
The haunting of a mute reproach shall dwell
For ever in her eyes till they be dead!

CROMWELL (*moved*). Silence! You speak you know not what. No more!
Thou voice within, why dost thou seem so far?
Shine out, thou fiery pillar! Bring me up
From the dead wilderness—

QUEEN. Oh! yield not to that voice, hearken to mercy,
And I will join my prayers to thine henceforth
That thy Elizabeth may live for thee.

CROMWELL. Madam, I came here with intent of mercy,
And with a hope of life.

QUEEN. Of life!—of life!

CROMWELL. I offer'd him his life—he scorn'd my offer!

QUEEN. No—no—he shall not. I am somewhat faint;
The hope thou showest striketh me like lightning.
Life! didst thou say his life? Ask anything.

CROMWELL. If he would abdicate and quit the kingdom.

QUEEN. And he shall do it. I will answer for it.
Give me but breathing-time to move him, Sir.

CROMWELL. Stay, madam. If we spare your husband's life
Your son has offer'd to submit his person
Into our hands, and set his sign and seal
To any proposition we demand.

"QUEEN. Thou strikest a fountain for me in the rock,
"And ere my lips can touch it, it is dry!"
My husband first must abdicate, and then my son.—
What was the answer of the King to thee?

CROMWELL. He doth refuse our mercy, and elects
To carry to his death the name of King.

QUEEN. When all was lost at Newark, and thy King
Was bought and sold by his own countrymen,
'Twas thou who with a fawning cozenage
Lured thy good master to undo himself.
To doubt where all his hope was to confide,
And blindly trust where every step was fatal!
'Twas thou, when the repenting Parliament
Were fain for reconcilement, brought thy soldiers—
Thou (jealous stickler for the Commons' rights)
Arrested every true man in the house,
And packed the benches with thy regicides!

CROMWELL. What, madam, is the purpose of this railing?

QUEEN. Thou think'st to make the mother a decoy,
And holding the lost father in thy grip,
Secure the son who yet may punish thee!

[*Chimes.—Three-quarters.*

CROMWELL. Madam, the clock! say, what dost thou intend?

QUEEN. To choke my sighs, to hide each bitter tear,
To keep a calm and stedfast countenance,
To mask my anguish from his Majesty.

CROMWELL. So! it were well; and then—

QUEEN. Then we will both be faithful to ourselves,
Even unto death!

CROMWELL. Will you not, madam, use your influence?

QUEEN. Never! My husband, sir, shall die a KING!

CROMWELL. Thou shadow of a King, then art thou doom'd! I wash mine hands of it.

(*Aside.*) What melancholy doth ravin on my heart?
Thou child of many prayers, Elizabeth!—
I'll to the Generals. Fairfax relents
That will not I. My hand is on the plough;
I will not look behind.

[*Exit* CROMWELL.

Enter HUNTLEY *and the Children.*

QUEEN. My lord, I thank thee. I am glad thou art come.

HUNTLEY (*with emotion*). Methinks those Roundheads do make light of me,
Or I this morning might have got some honour.

QUEEN. Honour!

HUNTLEY. To share my master's martyrdom.

[*The* QUEEN *extends her hand in silence.* HUNTLEY *kisses it.*]

QUEEN (*to* HUNTLEY *aside*). Do they know?

[HUNTLEY *shakes his head.*

PRINCE HENRY. Mother, we come to bring dear father back.

QUEEN. Sweethearts, you come to say adieu to him,
Perhaps for a long time—yes, a long time,
So he and I are very sad to-day.

" ELIZABETH. And we have no one now to tell us tales!"

QUEEN. Children, you'll see your father presently.
Oh, be so kind, and love him; put no question.
Mes chéries! Look at him all brave and smiling.
Give him one sweet, long kiss, and say good-bye!
Stay with Lord Huntley. I will call your father.

[*Enter* CHARLES.

KING (to QUEEN). My own sweet angel!
(*To Children.*) What, my sweethearts, too!
(*To* HUNTLEY.) Ah! faithful friend! Thou here?

HUNTLEY (*kneeling*). My liege!

KING (*raising him*). Rememberest thou my coronation morning,
When from the balconies, in smiling clusters,
Bent down to greet me England's chivalry,
And all along a bright cleft sea of welcome?
Upon that morn I had no sprightlier cheer,
Trust me, no sweeter speed, no surer hope
Than I shall carry forth with me to-day.
Is thy son well?

HUNTLEY. My liege, I am less grieved than proud to say
My son fought stoutly in your cause—he fell

KING. I can repay thee such a precious debt

With only thanks and tears! A day may come,—
Huntley—methinks thou art young enough to see it—
When the young King comes back to take his own:
I do bequeath to him my debts of love.
Farewell!

HUNTLEY (*overcome*). Farewell! my liege.

[*Exit* HUNTLEY.

KING. I had hoped that thou wouldst come with such fond longing,
That of my very longing came despair.

QUEEN (*to* CHARLES). The children—speak to them. I'll soon be calm.

KING (*to* ELIZABETH, *in a cheerful tone*).
Well, sweetheart, do you like your holiday?

ELIZABETH. Father, and must you go away?

QUEEN. Hush! hush!

KING (*to* HENRY). And you, my little truant! I have heard
That you begin to ride, and grow so stout.
Art thou not glad, thy mother hath come back?

ELIZABETH. Father, come back to Hampton Court with us.
The walks are cover'd with such bonnie pine-cones;
And, father, we might have a sail with you.

KING. Sweetheart, I am going from you for awhile;
And since thou'rt grown a tall man and a true,
I want thee to take trusty care of mother.

Thou'lt never grieve her, Henry, promise me;
And thou wilt talk of me right pleasantly,
Walk by her side, and prithee speak of me
As if I were at home—nay, walking with thee.

ELIZABETH. Tell us a story, father, say a ballad.

KING (*to* HENRY). Sweetheart, if they should want to make thee King
While Charles, thy loving brother, is alive,
Promise me now thou never wilt consent.

HENRY. Father, I shall be torn in pieces first!

KING. Brave boy! brave boy! It is a sacred promise.
(*To* QUEEN). Now, mother,—sweethearts, run ye to the window;
Horses and soldiers, and bright morning clouds!
A bonny sight!—there, run and look at them.

[*Children go to window.*

QUEEN. Do not speak much to me: I would be firm
Till—hold me to thy heart, but do not speak.

KING. There, there, bear up.

QUEEN. How hast thou suffer'd! On thy dear worn cheek
I see a history I dare not read.
These dear grey hairs! Oh, sweetheart, where was I
As this hoar frost of sorrow grew upon thee?

KING. Mary, we both are changed; and yet, and yet
It seems but yesterday, bright yesterday,
Since first I met thee, a young flutter'd stranger,

Who came all trust, yet trembling, to mine arms.
Methinks I see upon thy rippled hair
The olden sunshine, and the woven shadows
Of moving leaves that floated o'er thy dress.

QUEEN. Our brightest joys, still like the fatal opal,
Were bright yet baleful, sweet yet sinister.

KING. I have set by some little farewell tokens—
Dumb things that speak without the pain of words.
This emerald ring's for little Henriette;
Her tiny finger cannot fill it now;
In after years it will shine tenderly.

QUEEN. I'll keep it for her.

KING. Within yon ebon cabinet you'll find
A little book; some idle thoughts of mine,
Which to a loving ear may have some music.
Give it to my Elizabeth from me.
Here is a locket, with our hairs in plait;
Send it to Mary—'tis a pretty emblem
Of our young married life begun so brightly.

QUEEN. What more? I would do something. I can't speak.

KING. Nay, nothing more.
This miniature that I have kiss'd so often,
Till, like the pilgrim's lips, love left its trace
On the worn velvet!
This I will carry with me to the grave!
Cursed be the hand that robs it from my bosom!

QUEEN. I am jealous of its place. Cursed be the hand
That strikes at thee, and does not kill me too!

KING. Oh, my loved solace on my thorny road,
Sweet clue in all my labyrinth of sorrow,
What shall I leave to thee?
To thee I do consign my memory!
Oh, banish not my name from off thy lips
Because it pains awhile in naming it.
Harsh grief doth pass in time into far music;
Red-eyed Regret that waiteth on thy steps
Will daily grow a gentle, dear companion,
And hold sweet converse with thee of thy dead.
I fear me I may sometime fade from thee,

[QUEEN *presses to him.*

That when the heart expelleth grey-stoled grief
I live no longer in thy memory:
Oh! keep my place in it for ever green,
All hung with the *immortelles* of thy love,
That sweet abiding in thine inner thought
I long for more than sculptured monument
Or proudest record 'mong the tombs of Kings.

[*Soldiers enter, drawing up on either side of door. Bell tolls. Whilst the* QUEEN *seems to stiffen in grief,* CHARLES *kneels, kisses her, and goes to door.*

KING (*mournfully*). REMEMBER!

END.

APPENDIX.

ON CROMWELL.

To the Editor of the 'Morning Post.'

Sir,—As author of the play entitled 'Charles I.' at present being performed at the Lyceum Theatre, I beg to support my view of Cromwell's character by a few statements and quotations, which last I shall select from Liberal authorities alone. "Good wine needs no bush," and the character of Oliver Cromwell may bear a little good-humoured discussion without alarming his most jealous admirers. I may be allowed to premise that in the obnoxious interview between the King and Cromwell I have only endeavoured to paint the humble yet influential burgess of Cambridge—not the Protector; whose sagacity was in effect almost equivalent to principle, and whose outrageous despotism grew to a sort of grandeur. The play is of Charles, and not of Cromwell.

The degrading terms which Cromwell is supposed to advance to the King, namely, an offer of his support in consideration of an earldom, almost his hereditary right, awaken a chorus of indignation against me, and I am accredited with a slanderous invention. I really supposed the matter to be familiar to all readers of history: numerous contemporary pamphlets attest the statement which I have only antedated, and they certainly warrant the dramatist, if not the historian, in accepting it as a fact. All historians, favourable or unfavourable to Cromwell, admit that at Hampton Court he

had frequent conferences with Charles, and it was generally believed that the gist of his proposals amounted to this, that he should govern and the King might live. Furthermore, considering the unblushing rapacity which he displayed at this very period, by accepting from the government the confiscated estates of a loyal nobleman, the Marquis of Worcester, it seems to me that in exclaiming against the paltry charge above we swallow a camel and strain at a gnat.

In the character which figures in my play I have endeavoured, with one exception, to bring forward the popular qualities of a demagogue—a fearless front, bluff independence, pithy expression, and a certain command of the situation. His affection for his daughter displays itself; and, instead of the hideous levity of the great regicide, a measure of remorse for his great crime. In the Cromwell of history I find everywhere behind those vast public qualities which we all admit —duplicity, greed, cruelty, and tyranny. In support of this view, which I confess is, with many old truths, somewhat out of fashion to-day, I shall begin by quoting from an ultra-Republican author, Godwin, a stanch admirer of Cromwell. Where in all history shall we seek for a stronger instance of meanness and duplicity?—"Cromwell considered this the occasion (when suspected of being at the bottom of the army's discontent) to bring forward his masterpiece of dissimulation. He stood up in his place in Parliament and protested that to his knowledge the army was greatly misunderstood and calumniated. They willingly put themselves into the hands of the national representatives, and would conform to anything Parliament would please to ordain. If the House of Commons commanded them to disband, they would obey without a murmur, and pile up their arms at the door of that assembly. For himself, he entreated them to accept his assurance of his entire submissive obedience," &c. This from the man who presently outrages all privilege, all fealty, all this saintly outcry, by turning Parliament out of doors and

packing the benches with his regicides! Parliament voted by a majority of 129 to 83 to come to terms with the King. On the next day every man of the majority was a prisoner, or had flown; of the remaining minority only 53 voted for the death of Charles. Was this, then, the act of the nation, or of the individual? For the rapacity of Cromwell I need only point to the numerous confiscated estates he appropriated, so that he was enabled to settle upon one of his daughters at an early period of his career what would be equal to nearly £10,000 of our money at the present time.

For his cruelty I am embarrassed by the multitude of examples, and have only room for an ordinary passage:—"We refused them quarter," writes Cromwell, referring to the siege of Drogheda; "I believe we put to the sword the whole number of the defendants. I do not think a hundred escaped with their lives. Those that did are in safe custody for the Barbadoes," *i.e.*, slavery. Again: "The governor, Sir Arthur Ashton, and divers considerable officers being there, our men getting up to them were ordered by me to put them all to the sword; and indeed, being in the heat of action, I forbade them to spare any under arms in the town." And the cause of this rebellion was for liberty of conscience.

Why do we English revile Tilly and Wallenstein, Alva and Parma, &c., if this man be the idol of Englishmen? "It hath been a marvellous great mercy," he continues; "I wish that all honest hearts may give the glory of this good to God alone, to whom indeed the praise of this mercy belongs." This is the man who stabled his horses in St. Paul's, and turned our most venerable cathedrals into barracks! For the last five years of his life he governed England without a Parliament, and by martial law. "To govern according to law," writes Hallam, a Liberal, "may sometimes be the usurper's wish, but can seldom be in his power. The Protector abandoned all thought of it. Dividing the kingdom into districts, he placed at the head of each a major-general

as a sort of military magistrate, responsible for the subjection of his prefecture. These were eleven in number, men bitterly hostile to the Royalist party, and insolent towards all civil authority. . . . . All illusion was now gone as to the pretended benefit of the civil war. This unparalleled tyranny had ended in a despotism compared to which all the illegal practices of former reigns, all that had cost Charles his life and crown, appeared but as dust in the balance."

These quotations are familiar, but we forget their import in our worship of this historical "new-born gaud,"

> "And give to dust that is a little gilt
> More praise than gilt o'er dusted."

I have the honour to be, Sir, yours, &c.,

W. G. WILLS.

ARUNDEL CLUB, *Oct.* 24, 1872.

LONDON:
PRINTED BY WILLIAM CLOWES AND SONS,
STAMFORD STREET, AND CHARING CROSS.

This book should be returned to the Library on or before the last date stamped below.

A fine is incurred by retaining it beyond the specified time.

Please return promptly.

23498.56.12
Charles the First :
Widener Library
002688291
3 2044 086 871 209